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## **Sisters Among Four Women of Achievement Award Recipients**

*Mar-28-2006*

Four women – two sisters who secretly nominated each other, a groundbreaking African-American journalist and a Planned Parenthood director – are this year's recipients of the Women of Achievement Awards at Eastern Illinois University.

Sisters Diana Veach and Tammy Veach, both of Charleston, will be joined by Annette Samuels of Charleston and Robin Beach of Mahomet in being honored at a reception at 5 p.m. Tuesday, April 4, at the Tarble Arts Center on the EIU campus.

The event, which is free and open to the public, will also feature entertainment by the EIU Women's Chorus and an opportunity to meet this year's Living History program actors.

The Women of Achievement Awards are given annually by the EIU Women's Studies Program to women who have improved the quality of women's lives and advanced the status of area women.

The Veaches, who lost their mother to cancer in 1986, have each served as chairwoman or co-chairwoman of the American Red Cross' Relay for Life in Coles County for several years. This past year, the local event raised more than \$100,000 for cancer treatment and research.

The Veaches both serve as role models for other females, including Diana's 9-year-old daughter, Lynnsey, who received the local Jefferson Award for service last year for her fund-raising activities for victims of natural disasters and for Relay for Life.

Diana Veach leads her daughter's Junior Girl Scout troop, which has been very active in philanthropic activities in the community and beyond. She also heads up the American Cancer Society's Daffodil Days, volunteers in Charleston schools, delivers meals during the annual community Thanksgiving dinner and prepares meals at the PADS homeless shelter in Mattoon.

Diana Veach, who left her job of 23 years to pursue her bachelor's degree in elementary education, wrote that her sister gave her the encouragement and strength she needed to take that step.

And Tammy Veach considers her sister's support and example to be just as important to her.

"(Diana) is an unsung hero in our community and an inspiration to all who know her," Tammy Veach wrote, adding that Diana introduced her to community service.

Tammy Veach has an extensive list of community involvement; a small sampling includes work with the Coles County Humane Association, Habitat for Humanity, Special Olympics, Charleston public schools and her niece's Girl Scout troop.

"(Tammy) leads others by her extraordinary example," Diana Veach wrote.

Tammy Veach, a graduate of EIU who is now an English instructor there, teaches a freshman seminar course in which her students have raised money and volunteered for a variety of community organizations. She also helped start a Relay for Life event at the university.

"She is truly laying the foundation for a new generation of volunteers," wrote Karla J. Sanders, director of EIU's Center for Academic Support and Achievement.

The third honoree, Annette Samuels of Charleston, went from raising her younger siblings in the Bronx to having the distinction of being the first African-American and first woman to serve as a spokesperson for a U.S. president (Jimmy Carter).

Samuels, a former reporter and editor who received a master's degree from Harvard, also worked in the New York governor's office and was the press secretary for the mayor of Washington, D.C. She served as executive director of the District of Columbia's Commission on the Status of Women, and as a member of the delegation of the National Association of Commissions for Women, she attended the United Nations' World Conference on the Status of Women in Beijing, China.

Samuels, a journalism professor at EIU, teaches classes for the Women's Studies minor and serves on the EIU Women's Advocacy Council. She is involved in many other university and off-campus organizations, as well.

"Students say she has literally changed their lives in the way they see politics and media in the United States, especially the effects politics and media have on women," wrote Mary Kelly-Durkin, a former colleague of Samuels' at EIU. "They say Annette has influenced them to follow current events, to vote, to speak out on issues and to contribute to society and change the world."

The fourth award recipient, Robin Beach, an EIU graduate, is the director of client services for Planned Parenthood of East Central Illinois and chairwoman of Illinois' Family Planning Advisory board.

"She is recognized statewide and nationally as a leader in the field, especially with regard to quality medical care," wrote Karla J. Peterson, president and CEO of PPECI.

Beach has been instrumental in organizing programs to benefit primarily low-income clients.

As “a strong advocate for women’s health issues and reproductive rights,” Beach “has lobbied state legislators on health coverage for women regarding contraceptive prescriptions, health insurance for underprivileged children and sex education in our schools,” wrote nominator Amy Rose.

Also Tuesday, two students will each be presented with a certificate and a check for \$100 for winning the Women’s Studies Essay Contest. Winners are Mary Barford of Charleston, a graduate student in history; and Jeanne Myers of Salem, an English major.

For more information on WHAM, see the website at [www.eiu.edu/~wsminor/wham.html](http://www.eiu.edu/~wsminor/wham.html).